

## TITLE

An Application Programming Interface to the Simple Object Access Protocol

## TECHNICAL FIELD

5 This invention relates generally to computer operating system services, and, more particularly, to an application programming interface to the Simple Object Access Protocol.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 SOAP ("Simple Object Access Protocol") is a standard method for a client application running on one computer to request services from a server application running on another computer. SOAP encodes remote procedure calls into XML messages that are carried to the server by an HTTP transport protocol. By standardizing the protocol for this much-used service, SOAP eliminates protocol development redundancy and application-specific protocol variations. SOAP has been proposed to the Internet Engineering Task Force for consideration as an Internet communications standard. The proposal may be  
15 found at <http://search.ietf.org/internet-drafts/draft-box-http-soap-01.txt>.

However, the proposed SOAP standard does not specify an application programming interface (API) to allow applications to easily use SOAP. Each applications development group must individually code the interactions between its application and the SOAP protocol, leading to resource waste through coding replication and possibly to  
20 interoperability errors when connecting applications written by different development groups. Therefore, the lack of a standard SOAP API directly counters some of the benefits hoped to be achieved by using SOAP.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

25 The above problems and shortcomings, and others, are addressed by the present invention, which can be understood by referring to the specification, drawings, and claims. The invention provides a general API for SOAP-using client applications. The API provides mechanisms for creating all parts of SOAP request messages, for sending the created messages over HTTP to a remote server, and, if the request is successful, for retrieving the response from the remote server, or, in the case of failure, for accessing  
30 whatever error information is available. Applications developers building on top of this

API are freed from redeveloping these general mechanisms and can thus focus on the unique aspects of their applications.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the API consists of software objects. In addition to providing the well-known benefits of an object-oriented interface, this embodiment parameterizes the information passed through the API. Because of this, both  
5 the SOAP protocol and the applications that use it can change without requiring changes to the API.

Besides the aspects, features, and advantages described, the invention includes other aspects, features, and advantages that will become apparent from studying the  
10 following detailed description and claims.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

While the appended claims set forth the features of the present invention with particularity, the invention, together with its objects and advantages, may be best understood from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the  
15 accompanying drawings of which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram generally illustrating an exemplary computer system which may support the present invention; and

Figure 2 shows the steps an application may go through when using an object-oriented SOAP API according to one embodiment of the present invention.

### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

Turning to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements, the invention is illustrated as being implemented in a suitable computing environment. Although not required, the invention will be described in the general context of computer-executable instructions, such as program modules, being executed by a personal  
25 computer. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc., that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Moreover, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention may be practiced with other computer system configurations, including hand-held devices, multi-processor systems, microprocessor based or programmable consumer electronics,  
30 network PCs, minicomputers, mainframe computers, and the like. The invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by remote

processing devices that are linked through a communications network. In a distributed computing environment, program modules may be located in both local and remote memory storage devices.

#### Overview of a General-Purpose Computer

5 With reference to Figure 1, an exemplary system for implementing the invention includes a general-purpose computing device in the form of a conventional personal computer 20, including a processing unit 21, a system memory 22, and a system bus 23 that couples various system components, including the system memory, to the processing unit 21. The system bus 23 may be any of several types of bus structures including a  
10 memory bus or memory controller, a peripheral bus, and a local bus using any of a variety of bus architectures. The system memory includes read only memory (ROM) 24 and random access memory (RAM) 25. A basic input/output system (BIOS) 26, containing the basic routines that help to transfer information between elements within the personal computer 20, such as during start-up, is stored in ROM 24. The personal computer 20  
15 further includes a hard disk drive 27 for reading from and writing to a hard disk 60, a magnetic disk drive 28 for reading from or writing to a removable magnetic disk 29, and an optical disk drive 30 for reading from or writing to a removable optical disk 31 such as a CD ROM or other optical medium.

The hard disk drive 27, magnetic disk drive 28, and optical disk drive 30 are  
20 connected to the system bus 23 by a hard disk drive interface 32, a magnetic disk drive interface 33, and an optical disk drive interface 34, respectively. The drives and their associated computer-readable media provide nonvolatile storage of computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules, and other data for the personal computer 20. Although the exemplary environment described herein employs a hard disk 60, a  
25 removable magnetic disk 29, and a removable optical disk 31, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that other types of computer-readable media which can store data accessible by a computer, such as magnetic cassettes, flash memory cards, digital video disks, Bernoulli cartridges, random access memories, read only memories, and the like, may also be used in the exemplary operating environment.

30 A number of program modules may be stored on the hard disk 60, magnetic disk 29, optical disk 31, ROM 24, or RAM 25, including an operating system 35, one or more

applications programs 36, other program modules 37, and program data 38. Often, the operating system 35 offers services to applications programs 36 by way of one or more APIs (not shown). Because the operating system 35 incorporates these services, developers of applications programs 36 need not redevelop code to use the services.

5 Examples of APIs provided by operating systems such as Microsoft's "WINDOWS" are well-known in the art.

A user may enter commands and information into the personal computer 20 through input devices such as a keyboard 40 and a pointing device 42. Other input devices (not shown) may include a microphone, joystick, game pad, satellite dish,  
10 scanner, and the like. These and other input devices are often connected to the processing unit 21 through a serial port interface 46 that is coupled to the system bus, but may be connected by other interfaces, such as a parallel port, game port, or a Universal Serial Bus (USB). A monitor 47 or other type of display device is also connected to the system bus  
23 via an interface, such as a video adapter 48. In addition to the monitor, personal  
15 computers typically include other peripheral output devices (not shown), such as speakers and printers.

The personal computer 20 may operate in a networked environment using logical connections to one or more remote computers, such as a remote computer 49. The remote computer 49 may be another personal computer, a server, a router, a network PC, a peer  
20 device, or other common network node, and typically includes many or all of the elements described above relative to the personal computer 20, although only a memory storage device 50 has been illustrated in Figure 1. The logical connections depicted in Figure 1 include a local area network (LAN) 51 and a wide area network (WAN) 52. Such networking environments are commonplace in offices, enterprise-wide computer  
25 networks, intranets, and the Internet.

When used in a LAN networking environment, the personal computer 20 is connected to the LAN 51 through a network interface or adapter 53. When used in a WAN networking environment, the personal computer 20 typically includes a modem 54 or other means for establishing communications over the WAN 52. The modem 54,  
30 which may be internal or external, is connected to the system bus 23 via the serial port interface 46. In a networked environment, program modules depicted relative to the

personal computer 20, or portions thereof, may be stored in the remote memory storage device. It will be appreciated that the network connections shown are exemplary and other means of establishing a communications link between the computers may be used.

In the description that follows, the invention will be described with reference to acts and symbolic representations of operations that are performed by one or more computers, unless indicated otherwise. As such, it will be understood that such acts and operations, which are at times referred to as being computer-executed, include the manipulation by the processing unit of the computer of electrical signals representing data in a structured form. This manipulation transforms the data or maintains them at locations in the memory system of the computer, which reconfigures or otherwise alters the operation of the computer in a manner well understood by those skilled in the art. The data structures where data are maintained are physical locations of the memory that have particular properties defined by the format of the data. However, while the invention is being described in the foregoing context, it is not meant to be limiting as those of skill in the art will appreciate that various of the acts and operations described hereinafter may also be implemented in hardware.

#### An Application's Use of an Object-Oriented SOAP API

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, Figure 2 shows the steps an application may go through when using an object-oriented SOAP API. The client-side application 36, shown running on a general-purpose computer 20, needs a service provided by the server application 200. To request the service, the client-side application first creates a SOAP Request Object in step 202. This object conveniently presents to the client-side application all the information it needs with respect to this one SOAP request.

In steps 204-208, the client-side application 36 opens the SOAP Request Object and writes into it the information needed to create the request message. This information includes the address of the server that will process the request and the request itself. According to one aspect of the invention, this information (and the response and status information described below) is passed via parameters: this allows both the client-side application and the SOAP protocol itself to change without requiring changes to the API. When all the information has been presented, the client-side application in step 210 tells the SOAP Request Object to format and send the request.

The SOAP Request message 212 is sent via the HTTP protocol to the remote server 49, shown here connected to the client-side application's host by a LAN 51. The connection between these two machines may be much more elaborate, involving dial-up modems, the Internet, and the like. The SOAP Request message is passed along to the server application 200. Ideally, the server application responds favorably to the request, performs the requested service, and sends back a SOAP Response message 214.

The SOAP API provides one place for retrieving all status and response information relevant to this one SOAP request. In step 216, the client-side application 36 queries the SOAP Request Object. If the request was successfully processed, this Object includes an indication of success along with whatever information the server application 200 passed along. Errors can occur anywhere in the communications system, from the client-side application's mistaken use of the SOAP API, to lack of resources (such as memory) on the client-side application's host machine 20, to congestion on the communications link 51, to unavailability of the remote server 49. Because of this, in the case of an error the SOAP Request Object includes not just a failure indication but as much error-resolution information as can be reasonably gathered.

In order to prevent the client-side application 36 from having to constantly poll the SOAP Request Object for response and status information, the client-side application may be suspended in step 210 when the SOAP request is sent. The client-side application is then reanimated when there is new response or status information for it to process.

#### A Detailed Usage Guide to an Object-Oriented SOAP API

The steps 202-210, and 216 of Figure 2 are now described in more detail. A COM-based embodiment of the present invention may be built around an object class called SOAPRequest which exports the interface ISOAPRequest. In the following, coding examples are given in JScript.

#### Step 202      Create a SOAP Request Object

A SOAP Request Object can be created using COM's standard object creation techniques. The following code creates the object, referring to the SOAPRequest class by the ProgID "SOAPAPI.SOAPRequest."

```
//Create a SOAPRequest Object
var soapRequest;
soapRequest = new ActiveXObject("SOAPAPI.SOAPRequest");
```

Step 204      Initialize the SOAP Request Object

A SOAP Request Object is initialized with information about the remote service being requested. The client-side application 36 provides the name of the procedure that will perform the remote service and, optionally, the name of the interface to which the procedure belongs. The following code passes the name of the interface as a URI (Universal Resource Identifier); this is optional and the interpretation of its value is left up to the remote server 49. The procedure name is simply a text string; here it is "LoadFile".

```

//Initialize the SOAPRequest Object
10      soapRequest.Open("LoadFile", "TMediaPlayer", "uuid:47edc63b-4a80-494a-
        beea-39122c4a120c");

```

Step 206      Initialize the Headers of the SOAP Request Object

A client-side application 36 may wish to pass information to the remote server application 200 in addition to the information that is strictly part of the request for service. SOAP provides headers for this purpose, each header providing one piece of information for the server application. These headers and their attributes, including their number, names, and values, are not part of the SOAP specification but are defined by the client-side application. One embodiment of the invention parameterizes all of this information, thus allowing the information to change without requiring changes to the API. The information passing through the API in steps 208 and 216 is parameterized for similar reasons.

Each SOAP header is an arbitrary XML fragment containing a single root element. The root element may contain child elements or text. This is an example of a SOAP header called sequenceNumber:

```

25      <sequenceNumber>
          5
      </sequenceNumber>

```

Client-side applications 36 create header elements using XML DOM and then add them to a SOAP Request Object by calling the SetHeader() method. For more information on XML DOM, see Microsoft's XML Developer's Guide, incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. The following three code segments show the creation

and setting of a header. First, create a new XML DOM Document Object that will be used in creating the subsequent XML Nodes to represent each header:

```

//Create an XML DOM Document Object
var xmlDoc;
5   xmlDoc = new ActiveXObject("Microsoft.XMLDOM");

```

Next, use the XML DOM Document Object to create a sequenceNumber element and append to it a text node:

```

//Create the sequenceNumber Node
var sequenceNumberNode;
10  sequenceNumberNode = xmlDoc.createElement("sequenceNumber");
//Create the Text for the sequenceNumber and Attach It
var sequenceNumberTextNode;
sequenceNumberTextNode = xmlDoc.createTextNode("5");
sequenceNumberNode.appendChild(sequenceNumberTextNode);

```

15 Once the header element is created, it is added to the SOAP Request Object by calling SetHeader(). SetHeader() may also be used to change the value of an existing header.

```

//Add the sequenceNumber as a Header
soapRequest.SetHeader("sequenceNumber", sequenceNumberNode, 1);

```

Because headers are defined by the client-side application 36 and not by the  
 20 SOAP specification, it is quite possible that the remote server application 200 will receive a header that it does not understand. According to the SOAP specification, a header contains a mustUnderstand attribute. If this attribute is set to 1, then the server application cannot process the request unless it understands this header. SetHeader()'s third argument is the value of mustUnderstand.

25 An application can delete a header element by calling DeleteHeader() and can read the value of a parameter by querying the HeaderValue property.

#### Step 208 Initialize the Parameters of the SOAP Request Object

Requests can take any number of parameters of arbitrarily complex data types. Like the header elements described in the previous section, parameter values are  
 30 expressed as XML fragments. Each parameter element consists of a root element that may contain either child elements or text. This XML fragment shows how a parameter named fileName is specified in a SOAP request:

```

<filename>
  \\host\public\somefile.doc
35 </filename>

```

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```
5 //Create the fileName Parameter Node
    var fileNameNode;
    fileNameNode = xmlDoc.createElement("fileName");
//Create the Node Containing the File Name Text and Attach It
    var fileNameTextNode;
10    fileNameTextNode = xmlDoc.createTextNode("\\host\\public\\somefile.doc");
    fileNameNode.appendChild(fileNameTextNode);
//Add the File Name as a Parameter
    soapRequest.SetParameter("fileName", fileNameNode);
```

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If `Execute()` returns a success code, then the `ResponseElement` property contains the contents of the `Body` element of the XML response sent by the server application 200.

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## A Detailed Definition of an Object-Oriented SOAP API

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[id(3), helpstring("method DeleteHeader")]
HRESULT DeleteHeader([in]BSTR bstrName);

[propget, id(4), helpstring("property HeaderValue")]
HRESULT HeaderValue([in]BSTR bstrName,
5      [out, retval]IUnknown **ppUnkValue);

[propget, id(5), helpstring("method HeaderMustUnderstand")]
HRESULT HeaderMustUnderstand([in]BSTR bstrName,
      [out, retval]VARIANT_BOOL
      *pvbMustUnderstand);

10 //Parameter Manipulation
[id(7), helpstring("method SetParameter")]
HRESULT SetParameter([in]BSTR bstrName, [in]IUnknown *pUnkNewValue);

[id(8), helpstring("method DeleteParameter")]
HRESULT DeleteParameter([in]BSTR bstrName);

15 [propget, id(9), helpstring("property ParameterValue")]
HRESULT ParameterValue([in]BSTR bstrName,
      [out, retval]IUnknown **ppUnkValue);

//Invoke
[id(10), helpstring("method Execute")]
20 HRESULT Execute([in]BSTR bstrTargetURI);

//Feedback
[propget, id(11), helpstring("property ResponseElement")]
HRESULT ResponseElement([out, retval]IUnknown **ppUnkValue);

[propget, id(12), helpstring("property ResponseHeaders")]
25 HRESULT ResponseHeaders([out, retval]IUnknown **ppUnkValue);

[propget, id(13), helpstring("property ResponseFaultCode")]
HRESULT ResponseFaultCode([out, retval]BSTR *pbstrValue);

[propget, id(14), helpstring("property ResponseFaultString")]
HRESULT ResponseFaultString([out, retval]BSTR *pbstrValue);

30 [propget, id(15), helpstring("property ResponseFaultDetail")]
HRESULT ResponseFaultDetail([out, retval]IUnknown **ppUnkValue);

[propget, id(16), helpstring("property ResponseHTTPStatus")]
HRESULT ResponseHTTPStatus([out, retval]long *plValue);

35 [propget, id(17), helpstring("property ResponseHTTPStatusText")]
HRESULT ResponseHTTPStatusText([out, retval]BSTR *pbstrValue);

```

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```
[propget, id(18), helpstring("property RequestXMLText")]
HRESULT RequestXMLText([out, retval]BSTR *pbstrXMLText);
};
```

## Conclusion

In view of the many possible embodiments to which the principles of this invention may be applied, it should be recognized that the embodiments described herein with respect to the drawing figures are meant to be illustrative only and should not be taken as limiting the scope of invention. Therefore, the invention as described herein contemplates all such embodiments as may come within the scope of the following claims and equivalents thereof.